



Tuberculosis Elimination: Now Is the Time

World TB Day 2001

The Impact of Tuberculosis Worldwide

March 24

The History of World TB Day

In the late 19th century, tuberculosis (TB) killed one out of every seven people living in the United States and Europe. In Berlin on March 24, 1882, Dr. Robert Koch announced the discovery of the TB bacillus. At the time, his discovery was the most important step taken towards the control and elimination of the deadly disease.

In 1982, a century after Dr. Koch's announcement, the first World TB Day was sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Union Against TB and Lung Disease (IUATLD). The event was intended to raise awareness about the devastating health and economic consequences of TB, its impact on developing countries, and its continued threat to global health.

World TB Day - Today

Among infectious diseases, TB remains the second leading killer in the world, with 2 million TB-related deaths each year. Therefore, today's World TB Day is by no means a celebration. Instead, World TB Day is an occasion for countries around the world to raise awareness about the international health threat presented by TB. It is a day to recognize the collaborative efforts of all countries involved in fighting TB and for all countries to spread the word that TB can be cured and, with diligent efforts and resources, eventually eliminated.

TB - Not a Disease of the Past

TB is an ancient disease, but it is not a disease of the past. Worldwide, an estimated 2 billion people are infected with the bacteria that cause TB. TB is spread through the air from one person to another, usually when a person with TB in the lungs or throat coughs or sneezes. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected. Many people who have latent TB infection never develop TB disease. In these people, the TB bacteria can remain inactive for a lifetime without causing disease. But in other people, especially people who have weak immune systems, the bacteria can become active and cause TB disease.

We have medications that can prevent latent TB infection from becoming active TB disease, as well as cure people that are sick with TB disease. Many countries worldwide are also implementing highly effective TB control strategies in collaboration with the World Health Organization.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Global Facts about TB*

While TB is an ancient disease, it is also one of the world's deadliest:

- Each year, there are 2 million TB-related deaths worldwide.
- A disproportionate number of people who become sick with TB are the most vulnerable in any society: children, the elderly, the poor, the homeless, racial/ethnic minorities, and people infected with HIV.
- TB is the leading killer of people who are HIV-infected, accounting for one third of AIDS deaths worldwide.
- In most of the developing world, TB is the single most common opportunistic infection (OI) for people living with HIV/AIDS.
- TB causes more deaths among women worldwide than all causes of maternal mortality combined.
- Someone in the world is newly infected with TB every second.
- Nearly one percent of the world's population is newly infected with TB each year.
- Overall, one third of the world's population is infected with the TB bacillus.
- Each year, 8 million people around the world become sick with TB.
- Every day, 20,000 people develop TB disease and 5,000 die from it.
- TB accounts for more than one quarter of all preventable adult deaths in developing countries.
- One person dies of TB every ten seconds.

*Global Tuberculosis Control: WHO Report, 2000

For More Information:

World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/gtb/>

International Union Against TB and Lung Disease: <http://www.iatld.org>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/tb>

American Lung Association: <http://www.lungusa.org/diseases/lungtb.html>